

An Operational – Level Maneuver Concept for Littoral Penetration

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***AN OPERATIONAL-LEVEL MANEUVER  
CONCEPT FOR LITTORAL PENETRA TION***

by

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***"[T]he OMFTS force must have the ability to either mass, or disperse, forces expeditiously, in all weather and threat conditions. Projecting forces from sea-bases in the 21st century must not create the "friction" it does currently. The OMFTS force will attempt to generate a tempo advantage by operating to the depth of the operational objective area, shifting forces at will, allowing simultaneous engagement."*** General Charles C. Krulak

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** *An Operational-Level Maneuver Concept for Littoral Penetration*

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**Thesis:** This study contended that to "field a more versatile, capable, and responsive naval power-projection capability" during the forcible-entry phase of a year 2015 littoral penetration operation, the *Joint Force Littoral Penetration Component Commander* (JFLPCC) should centrally control the operational-level maneuver of multiple "*Littoral Penetration Task Forces* (LPTF)," which are each organized upon a structurally-robust Amphibious Ready Group *I* Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (ARG/MEU(SOC)) and employed as an operational maneuver group using the tenets of Napoleonic distributed maneuver to set favorable conditions for the *Littoral Exploitation Force* (LEF) penetration against an operational objective.

**Discussion:** Current OMFTS concept papers place considerable emphasis on tactical, rather than operational-level organization and employment methods to achieve success in year 2015 STOM operations. Significant gains in operational flexibility can be realized by forming the littoral penetration force under a Navy or Marine JFLPCC, who centrally controls where, when, but not how his LPTFs and LEF fight their next battle. Each LPTF should be founded on a ARG/MEU(SOC) and tailored with additional tactical units as required by the task and threat. Each LPTF must be fully self-sufficient across the six warfighting functional areas and be of adequate strength and mobility to force or refuse battle against *the most capable enemy unit it can reasonably expect to encounter within its zone*. Against a MTW-scale capable threat, it is easy to envision each ARG/MEU(SOC) base structure *expanding to that of a brigade- or air group -sized MAGTF*. The LEF is formed from the remainder of the amphibious forces assigned to the JFLPCC. Since this force is optimally tailored and employed to enlarge the initial breach or breaches made by the LPTFs and penetrate deep inland to attack the operational objective, it can be commanded by the assigned MEF commander. This sizable MAGTF assembles aboard the MPF 2010 *Plus* sea-base and its units employ ashore as amphibious ships and/or landing and air craft are made available from the LPTFs as they conduct extended operations ashore. Although not necessarily the operational reserve, the LEF is a dedicated exploitation force which is positioned specifically by the JFLPCC and employed at the right time and place to add weight and depth to the actions of the LPTFs. The JFLPCC initially employs his LPTFs across the theater's entire littoral region, each conducting tactical actions designed to find or create an enemy vulnerability. Once an exploitable vulnerability is discovered, the LPTFs and LEF use the superior mobility offered by the sea to converge the entire force at the penetration point(s). The penetration is initiated by one LPTF fixing the enemy in place in order to expose a vulnerability, while the remaining LPTFs converge on the location selected for the breach of the enemy's defensive system. The LPTFs not in contact become the "rupture force" and are "assigned the mission to penetrate the enemy's [defensive system], widen the gap, and hold the shoulders of the gap until" the LEF has passed through. The LPTFs' objective is to penetrate around or through the static front line units and then fix or destroy the mobile *tactical* reserves. The LEF follows the LPTFs through the penetration point, expands the gap, and attacks to destroy the operational reserve or to seize an operational objective which forces the reserve to turn from its intended course of action.

**Conclusion:** The JFLPCC achieves optimal operational flexibility by organizing into multiple, operationally-independent LPTFs and one LEF, and employing the autonomous actions of his force in concert to gain and carry forward local superiority of combat power until the operational objective is attained. This agile organization allows the JFLPCC to achieve the overwhelming effects of simultaneous, converging attacks upon single or multiple points, while still retaining the ability to rapidly shift his combat power to exploit opportunities.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY		i
SECTION 1	INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION 2	GENERAL CONCEPT	1
SECTION 3	NAPOLEONIC DISTRIBUTED MANEUVER	6
SECTION 4	JOINT FORCE LITTORAL PENETRATION COMPONENT ORGANIZATION	7
SECTION 5	CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS	13
SECTION 6	CONCLUSION	15
SECTION 7	NOTES	16
DIAGRAMS	1. STOM concept paper diagram	17
	2. Converging operations	18
	3. Fixing operations	19
	4. Parallel operations	20
	5. Tactical mission-change operations	21
	6. Naval support grid	22
	7. Joint Force Littoral Penetration Component organization chart	23
	8. ARG/MEU(SOC) tailored into a LPTF	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY		25

## **Introduction**

Current Marine Corps Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS) guidepost-concept papers envision year 2015 Navy/Marine forces conducting Major Theater War (MTW) forcible-entry operations using a Ship-to-Objective Maneuver (STOM) designed to "move a large force as seamlessly as possible from ... over the horizon (OTH) [amphibious platforms] to an objective as far as 120 miles inland."<sup>1</sup> STOM focuses on attacking an enemy center of gravity instead of terrain objectives, using the protective barrier of the sea to maximize mobility and achieve operational surprise, and exploiting preassault operations to find or create exploitable gaps that allow naval forces to apply their strength against enemy weakness. Once the gap has been identified, combat power is projected inland using "combined arms penetration and exploitation operations" empowered by "advanced command and control systems" and "significant improvements in tactical mobility" to maneuver forces from their OTH sea-base to the objective.<sup>2</sup> To turn these concepts into usable force structure, equipment, and doctrine, the Commandant of the Marine Corps has challenged the Navy-Marine Corps team to "examine our organizations, our training, our equipment and.... field a more versatile, capable, and responsive naval power-projection capability."<sup>3</sup> This study contends that to meet the Commandant's challenge during the forcible-entry phase of a year 2015 littoral penetration operation, the *Joint Force Littoral Penetration Component Commander* should centrally control the operational-level maneuver of multiple "*Littoral Penetration Task Forces*," which are each organized upon a structurally-robust Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and employed as an operational maneuver group using the tenets of Napoleonic distributed maneuver to set favorable conditions for the *Littoral Exploitation Force's* penetration against an operational objective.<sup>4</sup>

## **General Concept**

An official STOM concept paper diagram contrasts the way naval forces currently conduct ship-to-shore movement versus the way they intend to conduct OMFTS (diagram 1).<sup>5</sup> Upon close examination of the diagram, the one thing that does not change from traditional amphibious

operations to OMFTS is that all maneuver inland originates from a single amphibious task force (ATF). Note in the diagram that the STOM tactical unit maneuver arrows are two to three times longer than the traditional amphibious maneuver unit arrows. Even if advancements in technology solve some of the more complex maneuver problems--such as in-stride mine breaching, sea-based logistics, and OTH communication on the move--associated with STOM, it is reasonable to assume the enemy will use advanced technology to track a single ATF. If the enemy can track the ATF, then much of the operational and tactical surprise on which STOM so heavily depends will be reduced. It seems the OMFTS concept has created a magnitude of new problems for tactical unit commanders by continuing to conduct STOM operations from a centrally located ATF. One has to wonder why all the enablers that "will radically alter the nature of amphibious operations" have only been applied to tactical-level operations and have not altered the organization and employment at the operational level?<sup>6</sup>

The operational-level commander who is responsible for the success of the littoral penetration has three tasks that must be accomplished in order to successfully conduct a year 2015 STOM. First, he must determine, without compromising his plan, where the enemy defense is vulnerable so he can turn these vulnerabilities into exploitable gaps for the landing force's inland penetration. Second, he must be able to concentrate his assigned force's combat power, in all three dimensions, on the enemy weak point(s) in order to breach the enemy defensive system. This concentration of forces is intended to gain local superiority of combat power at the penetration point and must be done faster than the enemy can reinforce his ruptured defense. Finally, the operational commander must carry forward and sustain this local superiority of combat power from the penetration point until the landing force accomplishes its mission.

Suppose a capable enemy threat emerged in the 2015 time-frame that caused a substantial percentage of the Marine Corps to deploy as envisioned in current OMFTS concept papers. But instead of massing as one Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)-sized Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) embarked as the Landing Force of one ATF, why not improve the naval force's operational-level flexibility by taking advantage of the way the Navy/Marine Corps team normally

employs in its forward presence role? For the forcible-entry phase of the campaign, the one large amphibious force could be subdivided into smaller, but *operationally-independent* ATFs with an appropriate-sized MAGTF, each conducting simultaneous OMFTS-type operations across the theater's entire littoral region in accordance with an overall plan. For simplicity and to reduce any preconceived organization notions, each operationally-independent ATF is now called a Littoral Penetration Task Force (LPTF).

Landing force units not employed as part of one of the LPTFs, are received, staged, and integrated into another MAGTF formed aboard the Maritime Preposition Force 2010 *Plus* (MPF 2010 *Plus*) sea-base.<sup>7</sup> This MAGTF is the operational commander's dedicated exploitation force, called the Littoral Exploitation Force (LEF), and is employed to add weight and depth to actions of the LPTFs. It is formed from the remainder of the assigned MEF or even units from another MEF, service, or allied nation. The MPF 2010 *Plus* sea-base serves as the Littoral Penetration Assembly Area (LPAA), and is positioned as required to facilitate the littoral penetration operations. Its units employ ashore as amphibious ships and/or landing and air craft are made available as the LPTFs conduct extended operations ashore.

The operational commander arranges the tactical actions of the LPTFs and LEF to accomplish the tasks previously described and to increase the amphibious force's operational-flexibility. The LPTFs independent tactical actions serve as a reconnaissance-in-force to determine or create an enemy vulnerability that the operational commander can exploit with the remainder of the littoral forces. The tactical actions of the LPTFs and LEF provide options which the operational commander can use to exploit opportunities and set favorable conditions for the next battle.

For example, one employment option might initially have the LPTFs deployed across the theater's entire littoral region, each conducting tactical actions intended to find or create an exploitable vulnerability. Once a vulnerability is discovered, the LPTFs and LEF could be converged at the right time and place to gain local superiority and operational depth of combat power (diagram 2). Or, if the LPTFs are structured and employed correctly, one LPTF could

*force* the enemy, preferably its operational reserve, to react in one direction, while the remainder of the littoral penetration force attacks an objective in an opposite direction (diagram 3). Or, the LPTFs could all mass their efforts at one point to penetrate inland to achieve one objective while the LEF, upon receiving the LPTFs' amphibious ships and landing craft, attacks at another point to further reduce the enemy's ability to react (diagram 4). Further, the operational commander could capitalize on the "interchangeability" and "multi-role" capabilities of the MAGTF organization and its future delivery platforms by rapidly transferring tactical units *in the middle of a mission* from one command to reinforce the success of another command (diagram 5).

The employment of amphibious and fleet combatant ships in concert with the littoral penetration force is vital to achieving optimal operational flexibility. The ships' traditional land support roles of launch and recovery of landing craft, air- and surface-delivered fires, and sea-base combat and combat service support still remain, but are even more vital in an OMFTS operation. Picture the widely distributed LPTF ships forming a theater-wide support grid that can be leveraged by the operational commander. For example, envision one LPTF's landing force being cut off from its sea-based support as it penetrates to an objective deep inland. Instead of this landing force trying to reopen its severed line of communication with its own ships, why not draw needed support from another LPTF's ships (diagram 6)? Another option could be to converge all the "big-deck amphibious ships" in support of a specific tactical action to serve in similar fashion to the fast carriers used during the Korean War. This would provide a temporary *at sea airport* which could be used to reduce the turnaround time for Marine *and other service* fixed- and rotary-wing air support, such as the Short Take-off, Vertical Landing (STOVL) Joint Strike Fighter and Apache helicopters.

A littoral penetration force reorganized and employed in such a manner greatly enhances the commander's operational flexibility and further maximize the tactical-level capabilities enabled by the OMFTS platforms. At the operational-level the ATFs are operating on exterior lines. The operational commander leverages the unobstructed mobility advantage of the sea to converge the ATFs' widely distributed combat power upon a vulnerable point faster than his less mobile



land-based opponent can react. At the tactical level, the ATFs are operating on interior lines. Each ATF's ships can serve as a temporary sea-base to support multiple tactical actions ashore. In this manner one set of ships could support diverging land operations from a central position, while the other ATF ships sortie to the MPF 2010 *Plus* for additional forces or to employ the LEF. Employing the ships in this manner under the central control of the operational commander shortens the lines of operation and enables the main effort to be rapidly weighted or shifted. Before providing the necessary organization and employment method details to this general concept, it's important to understand what is meant by operational-level or operational maneuver.

*Campaigning* states that "at the operational level of war we conceive, focus, and exploit a variety of tactical actions in order to attain a strategic goal." This implies a broader perspective than the tactician's and requires the operational commander to "look beyond the battle--seeking to shape events in advance in order to create the most favorable conditions possible for future combat actions." Further, the publication emphasizes that "in its essence, the operational level involves deciding when, where, for what purposes, and under what conditions to [force] battle--or to refuse battle--in order to fulfill the strategic goal."<sup>8</sup> For the commander to conduct operational maneuver, he must have the capability and organization to arrange the tactical actions of his subordinate units to force the enemy to accept battle or series of battles if necessary, or refuse battle when offered by the enemy, until the conditions are right to resume the offense.

The operational commander does not directly fight the battle, rather he influences its outcome by setting favorable preconditions for the *next battle*. He does this by applying simultaneous air, land, and sea combat power that "best exploits friendly capabilities and inhibits the enemy."<sup>9</sup> The operational commander arranges the multiple tactical actions of his units so that their energies have a synergistic effect that forces the enemy to fight at a disadvantageous time and place. Ideally this convergence of combat power is directed against an enemy vulnerability and then immediately exploited because the operational commander has already set favorable conditions for the sequel. In this manner the commander uses operational-level maneuver "to [gain and] carry local superiority due to concentration [of forces] forward" in order to achieve his

military objective.<sup>10</sup> This ability to arrange and exploit the outcome of multiple tactical actions to accomplish a strategic objective is the essence of operational-level maneuver. Napoleon used an embryonic form of operational maneuver that is particularly germane to understanding this paper's organization and employment concept.

### **Napoleonic Distributed Maneuver**

Historian Robert Epstein summarized Napoleon's operational art as "distributed maneuver--the movement of major formations over a wide area according to a broadly conceived but flexible plan."<sup>11</sup> Napoleon structured his military into one Grand Army organized around multiple, combined-arms corps. Each corps was capable of independent combat action against a typical peer competitor, which meant it could "fight or alternatively avoid action, and maneuver according to circumstances without any harm coming to it."<sup>12</sup> This ability for his component units to fight independently of the army gave Napoleon an enormous advantage over his enemies because "for the first time an army could be dispersed in corps across the entire theater of operations, each deployed independently along its own axis of advance, and employed to accomplish specific missions as part of one overall campaign plan."<sup>13</sup>

Napoleon's strategic goal was usually the destruction of the enemy's main force. He typically used the suppleness of his corps-based army to project power deep into enemy territory to an advantageous position which *forced* the enemy to abandon his plan and fight on ground of Napoleon's choosing. The Grand Army usually advanced to contact using a natural barrier such as a mountain chain, vast forest, or broad river to mask its movement. In addition to using the macro-terrain, Napoleon centrally-controlled a cavalry screen whose outriders unrelentingly screened ahead conducting counter-reconnaissance, road mobility improvements, and path finding. Next came the combined-arms corps, deployed in a theater-wide wedge formation with each corps within mutually supporting distance from an adjacent corps. This broad formation not only maintained operational surprise by masking Napoleon's main effort, but also served to weaken his opponent by forcing him to spread his army out to cover his increasingly vulnerable flanks. Moreover, each corps served as a reconnaissance-in-force whose combined-arms strength

gave each one the ability to develop the tactical situation for the operational commander Napoleon to advantageously exploit.

Napoleon exploited the tactical actions of his corps by "shift[ing] from one tactical action to another consistently faster than the enemy." By controlling "the pace of events between engagements," Napoleon dictated the theater's operational tempo and kept the enemy unbalanced."<sup>14</sup> He did this by conducting operations akin to tactical battle drill, except he did it at an operational level. Once one of his corps came in contact with the enemy, it was that corps' responsibility to *force* the enemy to fight in one direction while Napoleon converged the remaining non-committed corps to overwhelm the fixed enemy's flank and rear. Further, he concentrated his rapidly converging corps not upon the advance guard who was fixing the enemy in place, but upon a corps not in contact with the enemy.<sup>15</sup> Then, with the majority of his army assembled in an advantageous position that cut the enemy from its base and reinforcements, Napoleon carried this local superiority of forces forward to attack the enemy's exposed flank or rear. Napoleon's distributed maneuver usually achieved a decisive victory thereby accomplishing his strategic goal. At the very least, his operational maneuver forced the enemy to turn from its intended course of action and fight the Grand Army under conditions that favored Napoleon.

### **Joint Force Littoral Penetration Component Organization**

Drawing on lessons from Napoleon's distributive maneuver to augment the details of the general concept, there are three organizational changes which can be applied to the littoral penetration force to field a more "versatile, capable, and responsive naval power-projection capability" for year 2015 STOM operations. First, to maximize operational flexibility during the forcible-entry phase, the LPTFs and LEF, to include the amphibious ships and platforms, can be centrally-controlled by one operational-level commander. The old ship-to-shore movement had distinct phases that made shifting command responsibility from a Navy commander to a Marine commander a practical element of amphibious operations. OMFTS operations that intend to maneuver, support, and sustain forces directly from their sea-base to the inland objective blur the line between traditional amphibious and land actions. Advanced command and control systems

provide a common operating picture to all levels of command and make distinctly sequential operating methods obsolete. The Navy and Marine forces involved in the forcible-entry operation require clear, service-parochial-free command relations which facilitate rapid operational and tactical battle rhythm.

The commander who is centrally controlling the LPTFs and LEF for the forcible-entry phase must be a *warfighting operational-level commander*. This commander can be the MEF-, Fleet-, or component-level commander who is directly *arranging and exploiting the outcome of multiple tactical actions to accomplish a strategic objective*. Called the Joint Force Littoral Penetration Component Commander (JFLPCC), he operates as a functional component commander and maintains tactical control, or operational control as necessary, over forces and capabilities made available by the Commander, Joint Task Force (CJTF) until the completion of the forcible-entry phase of the campaign.

As the warfighting operational commander, the JFLPCC generates speed by dictating the operational tempo within his zone. Whereas the tactical commander generates speed through decentralized, intent-driven maneuver which controls the "pace of events within an engagement," the JFLPCC generates tempo by creating favorable conditions for the tactical commander's next battle.<sup>16</sup> While Napoleon had to physically observe or rely on a report of a tactical action in order to capitalize on its success, tomorrow's operational commander is predicted to operate within a *situational awareness superiority umbrella* allowing near-simultaneous exploitation of multiple, tactical actions. Enhanced information systems can greatly accelerate the operational commander's decision-to-implementation time and make a layered command structure impractical for high tempo, forcible-entry operations.

The recommended method for organizing the Joint Force Littoral Penetration Component (JFLPC) for a MTW as previously described is depicted in diagram 7. This relatively flat structure has either the Navy or Marine component commander as the JFLPCC centrally controlling when and where, but not tactically how, the independent LPTFs and LEF fight their next battle. The JFLPCC has tactical control over all amphibious and MPF ships, and designated

combat ships, such as a DD-21 in direct support of each LPTF, required to accomplish the mission. Fleet combatant ships, such as carrier battle groups, can remain in the control of the Maritime or Navy Component Commander, although battle group assets and fires can be used to support littoral penetration operations as determined by the CJTF. The LPTFs and LEF commanders can either be the Navy or Marine commander appropriate to the organization he commands. Each of the JFLPC subordinate units is addressed separately below.

The second organizational change to the littoral penetration force is to form the LPTFs. Each LPTF must be fully self-sufficient across the six warfighting functional areas and be of adequate strength and mobility to force or refuse battle against *the most capable enemy unit it can reasonably expect to encounter within its zone*. Distributed maneuver depends on each autonomous maneuver element being able to throw or take a damaging punch in order to set the opponent up for the knockout blow, or combination of blows, arranged by the operational commander. Napoleon gained asymmetrical battlefield advantage by structuring each of his corps so they were equivalent in size and firepower to a typical peer competitor's field army. Thus, each corps presented a significant threat to the enemy commander which *forced* him to react to the widely-distributed actions of *each of Napoleon's corps*. This usually divided or exposed a vulnerability which Napoleon rapidly exploited with his remaining corps.

It is equally important for the LPTFs to be able to refuse battle, especially while conducting their reconnaissance-in-force mission, in order to avoid or delay battle until the conditions are right to resume the offense or to withdrawal to conduct a new mission. The operational independence that Napoleon achieved for each corps with numerical superiority, can be achieved in 2015 by combining the effects of the American asymmetrical advantages, such as air and maritime superiority, long range and precision fires, and global mobility. Once formed, each LPTF can be considered an *operational maneuver group* (OMG) because it has been tailored to force or refuse battle and achieve objectives that have strategic impact.

LPTF tactical missions can vary greatly from reconnaissance-in-force to amphibious raids to breaching force. Due to its OMG capability, each LPTF meets the requirements of a covering

force: "a force operating apart from the main force for the purpose of intercepting, engaging, delaying, disorganizing, and deceiving ... [and] which provides security for a larger force by observation, reconnaissance, attack, or defense,"<sup>17</sup> Indeed, such powerful, self-sustaining combat units operating in unison across a broad front or converged together in time and space serve to protect each others' flanks and provide mutual support. Most importantly, each LPTF can assume the role of operational reserve to exploit the success and add weight to the actions of an adjacent LPTF.

To accomplish the first operational task of determining an enemy vulnerability, a LPTF's typical mission-type order from the JFLPCC should be similar to an order VII Corps Commander General Franks issued to 2nd Air Cavalry Regiment (2nd ACR) during Operation DESERT STORM:

[A]ttack through the western flank of [Republican Guard's] defenses and conduct offensive cover operations to develop the situation for VII Corps.... [T]he regiment's task is to set the terms for action for the corps's main body and to serve as a base of fire and observation for the corps commander's maneuver.... If the enemy is moving, regiment meets and destroys advance guard battalions and develops the situation for the corps commander. If he is defending, regiment fixes the enemy from standoff range, finds his flanks, and assists in getting the division into the fight.<sup>18</sup>

General Franks' use of his independent tactical units to achieve optimal operational-flexibility is apparent. The intent of his order was directed at exploiting the decentralized tactical actions of 2nd ACR to set favorable conditions for VII Corps' next battle. Note General Franks' use of operational-level, mission-type phrases-- *develop the situation*, *set the terms*, and *corps commander's maneuver*--designed to force the decisive battle on terms favorable to VII Corps. Indeed, General Franks intended to use the results of 2nd ACR's tactical actions to find or force a critical vulnerability in the enemy defensive system which would become the point of attack for the rapidly converging VII Corps. Just as General Franks used 2nd ACR to develop VII Corps' sequels, so too can the JFLPCC use the LPTF's tactical actions to develop the JFLPC's next

battle. The LPTF's offensive actions can uncover a critical vulnerability in the enemy defensive system which the JFLPCC then uses to get the remainder of his forces into the fight.

The LPTF's initial distributed maneuver should reduce many of the tasks that are to be performed by the centrally-controlled Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) screen (CLOUD). Evolving concept papers envision this capability formed from a "variety of human and robotics sensor systems," which are employed clandestinely in a three-dimensional sensor grid between the Littoral Penetration Point (LPP) and the objective. The RSTA CLOUD's intelligence-collecting net enables the LPTFs to thrust inland by finding gaps or making gaps using sea-based fires, engaging targets using "commander's intent-driven targeting systems that allow the sensors to be immediately linked with available shooter units," and pulling maneuver units through weak points in the enemy's defensive system.<sup>19</sup>

The dynamic nature of the LPTF's distributed maneuver can cause the enemy to constantly adjust and then re-adjust his more mobile units, especially his general support fire units, and tactical and operational reserves. Therefore, prior to employing scarce human reconnaissance assets, only the RSTA CLOUD's robotics sensor systems should be used to observe the fluctuating enemy movements. Once the JFLPCC determines from the LPTF's tactical actions which vulnerability to exploit, then JFLPC-controlled human reconnaissance assets can be employed to facilitate the inland penetration. The advance guard LPTF can perform the close reconnaissance mission while the JFLPC-controlled assets perform the deep reconnaissance mission. RSTA CLOUD recommended tasks include: collecting the commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs) concerning the operational reserve; disrupting the mobile defensive system by using "sensor-to-shooter fires" to interdict the enemy's movement of forces to the penetration area; and denying the enemy key observation points along the expected penetration route. The RSTA CLOUD and the multiple LPTFs are the fluid, highly mobile tactical units the JFLPCC can use to set the conditions for the exploitation force's deep penetration inland.

To conduct this wide variety of tactical actions *from the sea*, each LPTF must be thoroughly organized, equipped, and trained in amphibious operations prior to deploying to theater. Proficiency in individual, unit, and staff amphibious skills needed to conduct forcible-entry operations are best gained through repeated practice and refinement. Since the enemy also learns from the past, its leaders will not wait on a MEF-sized naval force to first train to standard in amphibious operations before striking. Only the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) / Marine Expeditionary Unit-Special Operations Capable (MEU(SOC))s (ARG/MEU(SOC)) spend six months training to standard in amphibious operations; therefore, are the *optimal foundation upon which to build* a Littoral Penetration Task Force.

Many of the capabilities that make a ARG/MEU(SOC) such a vital asset to the unified combatant commanders also make these units ideally suited as the cornerstone by which to build a modern day, amphibious "Napoleonic corps." Small boat, deep reconnaissance, amphibious raids, self sustainment for fifteen days, and carrier battle group integration are just some ARG/MEU (SOC) particular capabilities which are extremely useful tools for a force required to penetrate the littorals. Most importantly, the ARG/MEU(SOC)s' proven ability to conduct a variety of tactical missions from the sea at a sustained, rapid rhythm is the operating capability and agility needed for mission success in an OMFTS environment. It would be hard to argue that a temporary MAGTF, hastily formed in response to a crisis, could achieve the same proficiency in amphibious operations as a structurally-expanded MEU(SOC).

Each LPTF can be founded on a ARG/MEU(SOC) and tailored with additional tactical units as required by the task and threat (diagram 8). Each LPTF can grow in magnitude to meet OMG capability, but it is essential that the ARG/MEU(SOC)'s root structure--the core leaders, staffs, and operating procedures--remain in place to foster the exponential growth of the organization. For instance, against a MTW-scale capable threat, it is easy to envision *each MEU(SOC) base structure expanding to that of a brigade- or air group-sized MAGTF*. Further, to reach the ideal three LPTFs for optimal operational flexibility, only a few amphibious ships and landing craft would have to be augmented from allied nations to raise the amphibious lift



capability to three brigade-size equivalents. This means the JFLPCC has approximately a MEF-sized capability in his mobile LPTFs and, depending on the throughput capacity of the MPF 2010 *Plus*, another MEF-sized capability assembling at the sea-base as his LEF. Each LPTF can remain so organized until completion of the forcible-entry phase or until the special task organization is no longer required. Once disbanded, each unit can reform under their parent organization for sequential phase operations.<sup>20</sup>

The third organizational change is to form the Littoral Exploitation Force (LEF) from the remainder of the amphibious forces assigned to the JFLPCC. Since this force is optimally tailored and employed to enlarge the initial breach or breaches made by the LPTFs and penetrate deep inland to attack the operational objective, it can be commanded by the assigned MEF commander. This facilitates follow-on extended land operations with the tactical units from the then disbanded LPTFs reverting to their traditional position in the MEF's pyramid-structure. As previously mentioned, this sizable MAGTF assembles aboard available amphibious ships not in use by the LPTFs and aboard the MPF 2010 *Plus* sea-base. Although not necessarily the operational reserve, the LEF is a dedicated exploitation force which is positioned specifically by the JFLPCC and employed at the right time and place to add weight and depth to the actions of the LPTFs.

### **Concept of Operations**

How does the JFLPCC employ his LPTFs to introduce the LEF to optimally conduct a successful STOM operation? During the Deployment Phase of the campaign, the JFLPCC's aim is to assemble, tailor, and position his forces for the subsequent forcible-entry phase. Upon receipt of a deployment order from the National Command Authority, the ARG/MEU(SOC)s steam to an assigned LAA located OTH from the combatant country. Simultaneously, the component and MEF command elements, and designated CONUS-based augment forces, deploy via strategic assets to an already sortied MPF 2010 *Plus* sea-base and link-up with their pre-positioned equipment and assigned amphibious platforms while underway. Once in theater, ideally three ARG/MEU(SOC)s are formed into operationally-independent LPTFs and employed in individual Littoral Penetration Zones (LPZs) using the concepts of distributed maneuver. The

MEF staff forms the LEF aboard available amphibious shipping and stages forces not embarked to assembly areas located aboard the MPF 2010 *Plus* sea-base.

During the Forcible-entry Phase of the campaign, one objective assigned to the JFLPCC may be to destroy or turn the enemy's operational reserve. There is no set formula for doing this, rather the LPTFs, in concert with the theater- and JFLPC-directed RSTA CLOUD, conduct simultaneous enabling actions as previously described. To turn the enemy operational reserve, these actions are conducted for three reasons. First, the multiple offensive actions across a wide front take the initiative away from the defender and allow the JFLPCC to control the tempo of operations within his Littoral Penetration Area (LPA). Second, the LPTFs' distributed maneuver forces the enemy to defend everywhere, while masking the true intent of the operations. For example, although the JFLPCC should centrally control all the assigned fixed-wing air during this phase, the LPTFs' organic platforms can sortie from their "big-deck" amphibious ships to reinforce the distributed maneuver concept of widely converging attack. Once again, enhanced information technologies make widely distributed maneuver, in every dimension, possible. Third, the multiple attacks across a broad front force the enemy's operational reserve into one central location that covers the greatest number of axes of advance. While this may give the enemy commander flexibility to use his reserve in several directions, it does make it difficult for him "to use most of his reserves ... at the point which will actually be attacked."<sup>21</sup> It also forces the enemy's operational reserve into a centrally located position which facilitates his being turned or destroyed by the JFLPC.

The penetration is initiated by one LPTF fixing the enemy in place in order to expose a vulnerability, while the remaining LPTFs converge on the location selected for the breach of the enemy's defensive system. The LPTFs not in contact become the "rupture force" and are "assigned the mission to penetrate the enemy's [defensive system], widen the gap, and hold the shoulders of the gap until" the LEF has passed through.<sup>22</sup> The LPTFs' objective is to penetrate around or through the static front line units and then fix or destroy the mobile *tactical* reserves. The LEF follows the LPTFs through the penetration point, expands the gap, and attacks to

destroy the operational reserve or to seize an operational objective which forces the reserve to turn from its intended course of action.

The JFLPCC facilitates the LEF's forward drive by using the RSTA CLOUD to extend his vision and influence over the battlespace. The "sensors" provide early indications and warning of enemy reactions to the thrust and are positioned to pull the LEF's lead unit through the defense's seams. Just as important, the RSTA CLOUD disrupts the mobile defensive system by using "sensor-to-shooter fires" to interdict the enemy's operational and tactical reserve units from moving from their static defensive positions to their counter-attack assembly areas. The JFLPC commander maintains the LEF's forward momentum by regulating the flow of follow-on combat and combat support units from their ships at sea to the shore and through the ever widening breach. The JFLPC commander controls the valve and pushes forces and supplies from the sea-base to the critical thrust points in order to maintain and carry local superiority due to concentration of forces forward until the objective is accomplished.

### **Conclusion**

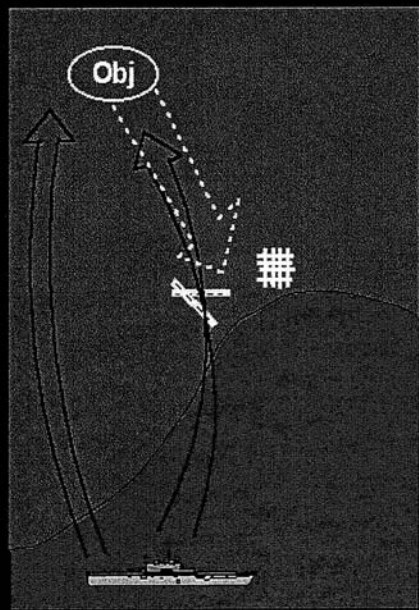
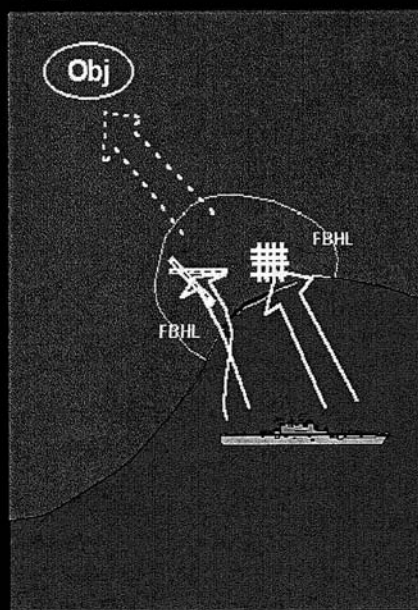
The Joint Force Littoral Penetration Component provides a "more versatile, capable, and responsive naval power-projection capability" for the forcible-entry phase of a year 2015 littoral penetration operation. The commander achieves optimal operational flexibility by organizing into multiple, operationally-independent Littoral Penetration Task Forces and one Littoral Exploitation Force, and employing the autonomous actions of his force in concert using the tenets of Napoleonic distributed maneuver. This agile organization allows the JFLPC commander to achieve the overwhelming effects of simultaneous, converging attacks upon single or multiple points, while still retaining the ability to rapidly shift his combat power to exploit opportunities. Indeed, this operational-level organization and employment method would significantly enhanced the tactical-level OMFTS enablers and would genuinely offer a radical transformation in amphibious operations.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Marine Corps Warfighting Lab (MCWL), *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Ship to Objective Maneuver*, Study, Undated, 1.
- <sup>2</sup> United States Marine Corps Concepts Division Pamphlet. *United States Marine Corps Warfighting Concepts for the 21st Century* (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps Concepts Division, 25 July 1997), II-8.
- <sup>3</sup> "Operational Maneuver From the Sea," January 1997, Gen Charles C. Krulak, downloaded from MarineLINK, The Commandant's Page, 30 March 1999.
- <sup>4</sup> Marine Corps Warfighting Lab (MCWL), *Experimental Concept of Operations for Littoral Campaigning*. Study, undated, 21. This study uses Littoral Penetration Task Force (LPTF) to designate an organization with similar mission and force structure.
- <sup>5</sup> United States Marine Corps Concepts Division Pamphlet. *United States Marine Corps Warfighting Concepts for the 21st Century* (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps Concepts Division, 25 July 1997), II-7.
- <sup>6</sup> United States Marine Corps Concepts Division Pamphlet. *United States Marine Corps Warfighting Concepts for the 21st Century* (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps Concepts Division, 25 July 1997), II-4.
- <sup>7</sup> The Defense Science Board 1998 Summer Study Task Force, *Joint Operations Superiority in the 21st Century*, vol. 1, (Washington: Office of the Under Sec. of Def. for Acquisition and Tech, 7 December 1998), M-4.
- <sup>8</sup> United States Marine Corps *Campaigning 1-2* (Washington: GPO, 1997), PCN 142 000008 00, 3-9.
- <sup>9</sup> Jt Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-0--Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington: GPO, 1995), III-15.
- <sup>10</sup> F.O Miksche, *Attack: A Study of Blitzkrieg Tactics*, trans. Tom Wintringham (New York: Random House, 1941), 41.
- <sup>11</sup> Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War*, (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1994), 26.
- <sup>12</sup> Napoleon I, quoted in David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 154.
- <sup>13</sup> Maj John L. Mayer, USMC. *The Napoleonic Corps: Embryo of the Operational Level of War*. SAW research paper (Quantico, VA: School of Advanced Warfighting, December 1998), i.
- <sup>14</sup> United States Marine Corps *Campaigning 1-2* (Washington: GPO, 1997), PCN 142 000008 00, 73.
- <sup>15</sup> Jean L. Cohn, *The Transformation of War*, trans. L.H.R. Pope-Hennessy (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 286.
- <sup>16</sup> United States Marine Corps *Campaigning 1-2* (Washington: GPO, 1997), PCN 142 000008 00, 73.
- <sup>17</sup> United States Marine Corps *Marine Corps Operations 0-1* (Washington: GPO, 22 Sep 1998), 123.
- <sup>18</sup> Fred Franks, Gen., USA quoted in Tom Clancy, *Into the Storm--A Study in Command* (New York: Berkley Books, 1998), 234.
- <sup>19</sup> Marine Corps Warfighting Lab (MCWL), *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Ship to Objective Maneuver*, Study, Undated, 1,
- <sup>20</sup> Marine Corps Warfighting Lab (MCWL), *Experimental Concept of Operations for Littoral Campaigning*. Study, undated, 9.
- <sup>21</sup> F.O Miksche, *Attack: A Study of Blitzkrieg Tactics*, trans. Tom Wintringham (New York: Random House, 1941), 53.
- <sup>22</sup> United States Marine Corps *Marine Corps Operations 0-1* (Washington: GPO, 22 Sep 1998), 99. Methods adopted from Breakout From Encirclement procedures.

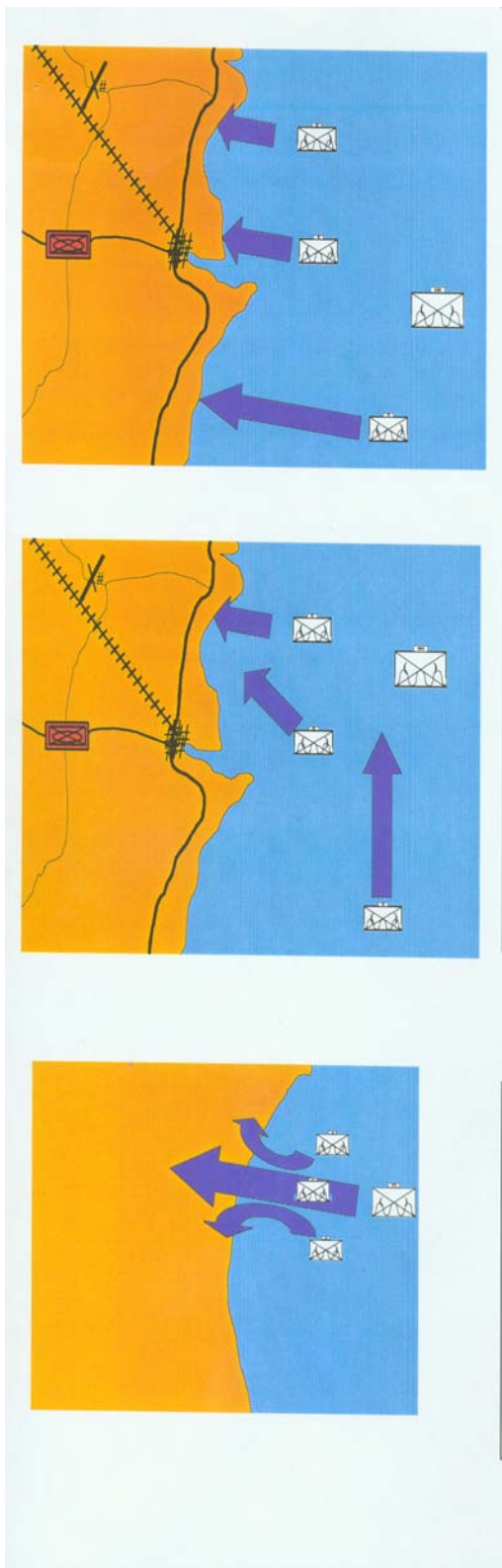


## The way we are and the way we need to be



"Ship-To-Objective Maneuver," July 1997, LtGen Paul K. Van Riper, downloaded from MarineLINK, Concepts Division, 24 May 1999.

DIAGRAM 1



The three LPTFs deploy across the theater's entire littoral region, each conducting tactical actions-such as amphibious raids, demonstrations, and reconnaissance-in-force-to find or create an exploitable enemy vulnerability.

The LEF is formed aboard the MPF 2010 Plus and loiters in the LPAA

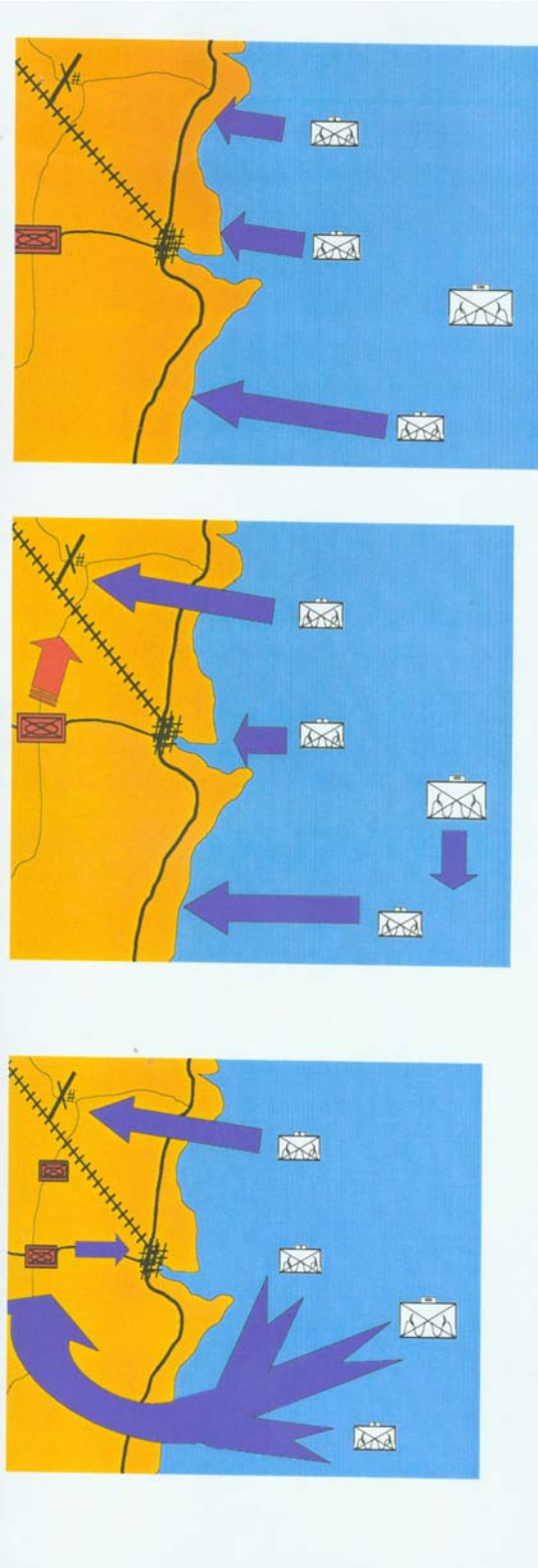
The enemy operational reserve is forced into a central location to best counter the attacker's wide distribution of units.

The operational commander determines an enemy vulnerability can be exploited in the northern Littoral Penetration Zone. The remainder of the force disengages from its current mission and converges on the northern LPTF.

**The three LPTFs converge on the location selected for the breach. The LPTFs become the "rupture force" responsible for penetrating the enemy defensive system, widening the gap, and holding the shoulders of the gap open until the LEF passes through the breach. The LPTFs should destroy or prevent the enemy's tactical reserves from interfering with the LEF's penetration.**

**The LEF follows the LPTFs through the penetration point, expands the gap, and attacks to destroy the enemy operational reserve or seize an operational objective.**

**DIAGRAM 2**



The three LPTFs deploy across the theater's entire littoral region, each conducting tactical actions—such as amphibious raids, demonstrations, and reconnaissance-in-force—to find or create an exploitable enemy vulnerability.

The LEF is formed aboard the MPF 2010 *Plus* and loiters in the LPAA

The enemy operational reserve is *forced* into a central location to best counter the attacker's wide distribution of units.

The Northern LPTF attacks toward a key air and rail center *forcing* the enemy operational reserve to react in that direction.

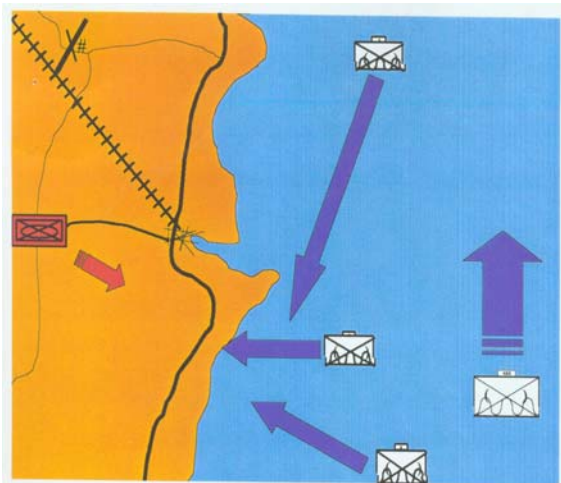
The center LPTF continues to fix the remainder of the operational reserve while the LEF shifts toward the solution LPTF

The northern LPTF could continue to attack or could disengage and withdrawal depending on the overall success of the remainder of the force.

The remainder of the littoral penetration force converges on the southern LPTF to gain and carry forward local superiority of combat power in order to achieve the operational objective—in this case, the remainder of the enemy operational reserve and then the port from reserve.

**DIAGRAM 3**





The three LPTFs converge on a vulnerable point in the enemy defensive system discovered or created by the center LPTF.

The LEF is formed aboard the MPF 2010 *plus* and begins movement north.

The enemy operational reserve is *forced* toward the south by what he perceives as the littoral penetration force's main effort.



The LPTFs conduct an amphibious assault and attack inland toward assigned objectives. Their amphibious ships and landing craft are detached and move to link-up with the LEF.

The LEF arrives at an over-the-horizon Littoral Penetration Assembly Area and prepares to link-up with the LPTFs amphibious ships.

The enemy operational reserve is fixed in the south by the LPTFs assault



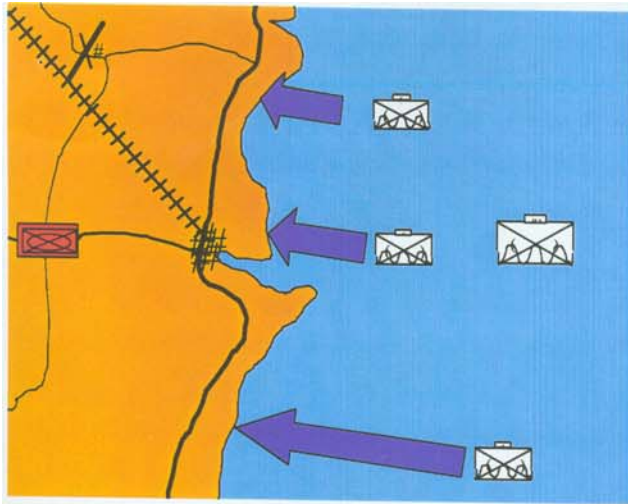
The three LPTFs continue to attack their assigned objectives.

The LEF attacks a northern objective that has been left uncovered by the enemy operational reserve.

The amphibious ships move to a central location to provide combat and combat service support to the entire landing force from a central location.

**DIAGRAM 4**

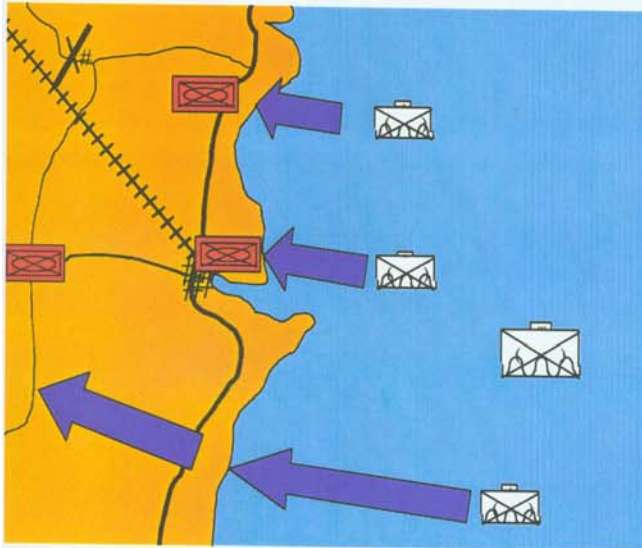




The three LPTFs deploy across the theater's entire littoral region, each conducting tactical actions-such as amphibious raids, demonstrations, and reconnaissance-in-force-to find or create an exploitable enemy vulnerability.

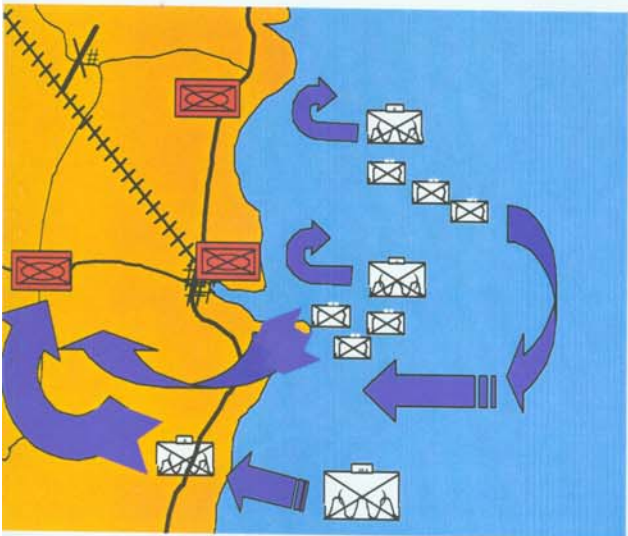
The LEF is formed aboard the MPF 2010 Plus and loiters in the LPAA

The enemy operational reserve is forced into a central location to best counter the force attacker's wide distribution of units.



The two northern LPTFs encounter strong enemy resistance. The southern LPTF finds a gap in the enemy's defensive system and continues with its mission.

The LEF begins shifting south to better Position itself to exploit the southern LPTF's success



Once the northern LPTFs have broken contact with the enemy, they detach their helicopter-borne assault units to the southern LPTF to add weight to its forward momentum. LCAC-borne units could also be detached and employed with the southern LPTF.

The LEF exploits the success of the southern LPTF as amphibious ships and landing craft are made available.

**DIAGRAM 5**



The southern LPTF and LEF from diagram 5 continue to attack inland. Bypassed enemy units cut the penetrating forces' lines of communication (LOC) back to their organic support ships.



The attacking LPTF and LEF continue to advance establishing a new LOC with the center LPTF.

If necessary, the center LPTF could fight the needed re-supplies inland and join the attacking forces.



The attacking LPTF and LEF continue to advance establishing a new LOC with the northern LPTF.

As with the center LPTF, the northern LPTF could fight the needed re-supplies inland and join the attacking forces.

**DIAGRAM 6**

# JOINT FORCE LITTORAL PENETRATION COMPONENT (JFLPC)

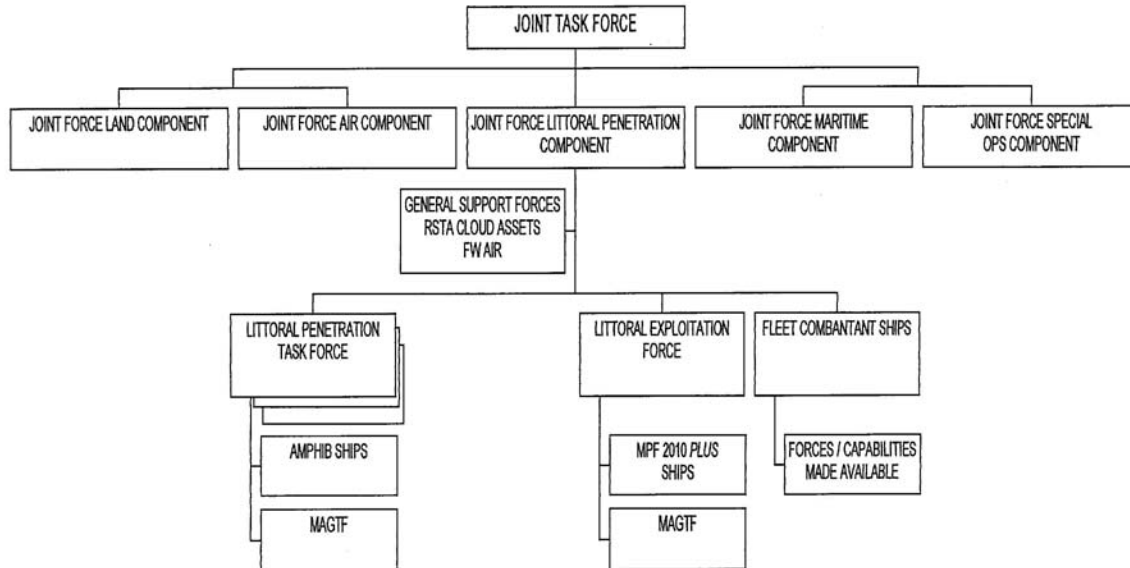
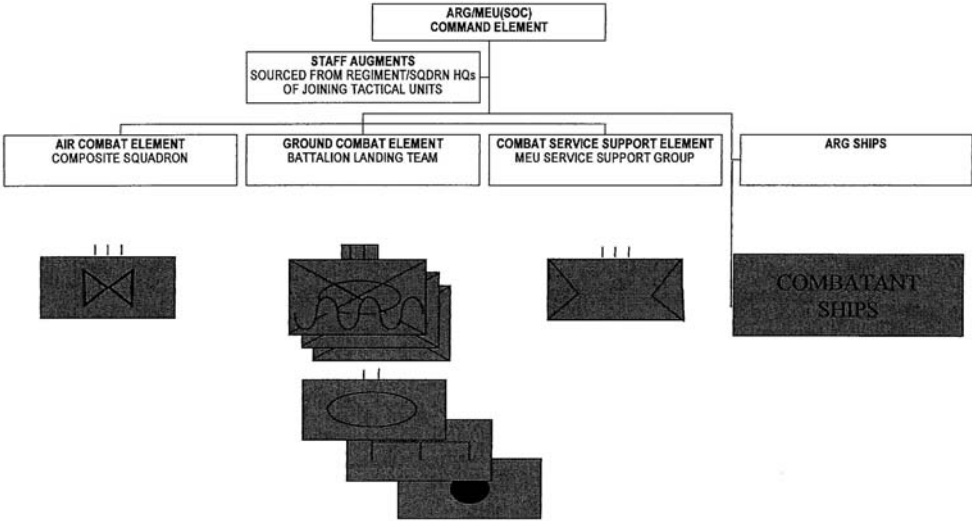


DIAGRAM 7

# ARG/MEU(SOC) TAILORED INTO A LPTF



**EACH ARG/MEU(SOC) COULD EXPAND TO A “MEB-SIZED” LPTF**

DIAGRAM 8

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